

IV. *Of the Use of Opium among the Turks:* By Dr. Edward Smyth, F. R. S.

MY Residence in *Turkey* having given me an opportunity of Informing my self, how far the *Turks* are gone into the Use of *Opium*, and what are the common Effects of it; I humbly presume to offer an Account of my Observations to the Society.

I made Enquiry for the most famous *Opium* Eater in the Country about *Smyrna*, and had recommended to me one *Mustapha Shatoor*, an Inhabitant of *Sediqui*, a Village Six Miles from that City, by Trade a Coffee-man, and Forty five Years Old when I Discoursed with him: Going into the Subject for which I had called him, he told me his Constant, Eating was three Drams a Day of Crude *Opium*, one half of which was his Dose in the Morning, and the other half in the Afternoon, but that he could safely take double this quantity.

Resolving therefore to be an Eye-witness of what he could do. I provided the best *Opium* I could get, and weighed it nicely into Drams; I desired him to come to me before he had taken any part of his Dose, and that I would entertain him the next Morning; he took the Invitation thankfully, and came to me the next day, at Nine in the Morning, but excused his having taken half a Dram before, because he wanted Strength to rise out of his Bed without it. I laid before him my *Opium* made up in Pills, each weighing a Dram, and desired him to eat what he pleased; he took one Dram and a half, making it up in three Pills, and chewing it with a little Water; he commended the *Opium*, but
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was not willing to eat more at that time, and I would not press him, for fear of Accidents. He stayed with me about half an Hour after he had eaten the Opium; the visible Effects it had upon him were to make his Eyes sparkle, and to give a new Air of Life and Brightness to his Face. He told me, that he was extremely refreshed, and made very cheerful by my Entertainment, and that it gave him his *Keph*, as the Turks express it.

He went from me to his Coffee house, and being desirous to observe him that Day, I found him in half an Hour Labouring heartily at cleaving Wood to Burn. I desired his Company again, when he was prepared for a Second Dose; he came to me at three in the Afternoon, and took the same quantity as in the Morning, and appeared after it with the same Symptoms.

He told me he would be again ready for the same quantity, at the same distance of Time, but I pursued the Experiment no further. He says it has always the same Effects, giving him Vigour and Spirit, and is now become as necessary to him, as any other part of his Sustenance; that it makes him fitter for Procreation, for he has many Wives and Children; that it never affects him with Sleep and Drowsiness, but rather hinders his Reposing, when he happens to take too much of it; that he entered upon this practice Twenty five Years ago, beginning with the bigness of a Grain, and so Training up Nature gradually to larger quantities; that the want of it, and the desire of taking more, grows daily upon him; that his common Expence for Living, is three *Parabs* a day in *Opium*, one in Tobacco, two in Coffee, and two in Bread: A *Parab* is about a Penny Farthing in our Money.

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The Alteration and Impairment which this Custom have produced in him are, Weakness, his Legs being small, his Gums eaten away, so that the Teeth stand bare to the Roots, his Complexion very Yellow, and appearing Older by Twenty Years, then he really is.

I asked him if he knew any Body who could take Opium in larger Quantities, his Answer was, he believed there was none in that Country that could out-do him, but that he was informed of some in *Arabia* and about *Damascus*, where this Custom of Eating Opium obtained more Universally.

Opium is commonly taken by the Messengers in *Turkie*, who are employed in making quick dispatches; 'tis generally part of their Provision; they take it when they find themselves Tired, and it gives them Strength and Spirit to proceed. I had the following Relation of one of them, that coming from *Constantinople* to Mr. *Samuel Bernardiston*, a Merchant of *Smyrna*; at entering into the Gentleman's House, he fell down for Dead; at which, when the whole House was Surprised and concerned, one of the Servants rightly judging, that this Fainting away, was occasioned by the stock of Opium laid in for his Journey being spent, forced a little of it into his Mouth, and by this means he presently Recovered, and acknowledged the Servant had been his Physician.

The *Turks* use Opium made up with something that renders it Palatable at their Feast called *Biram* to make them Cheerful, which may be one Reason of its prevailing so much; for finding it then entertains them with pleasing Fancies, they are Tempted to continue it, and so the use of it becomes necessary and grows upon them.

To this, other Reasons might also be added, but they are out of the Bounds of Philosophy.